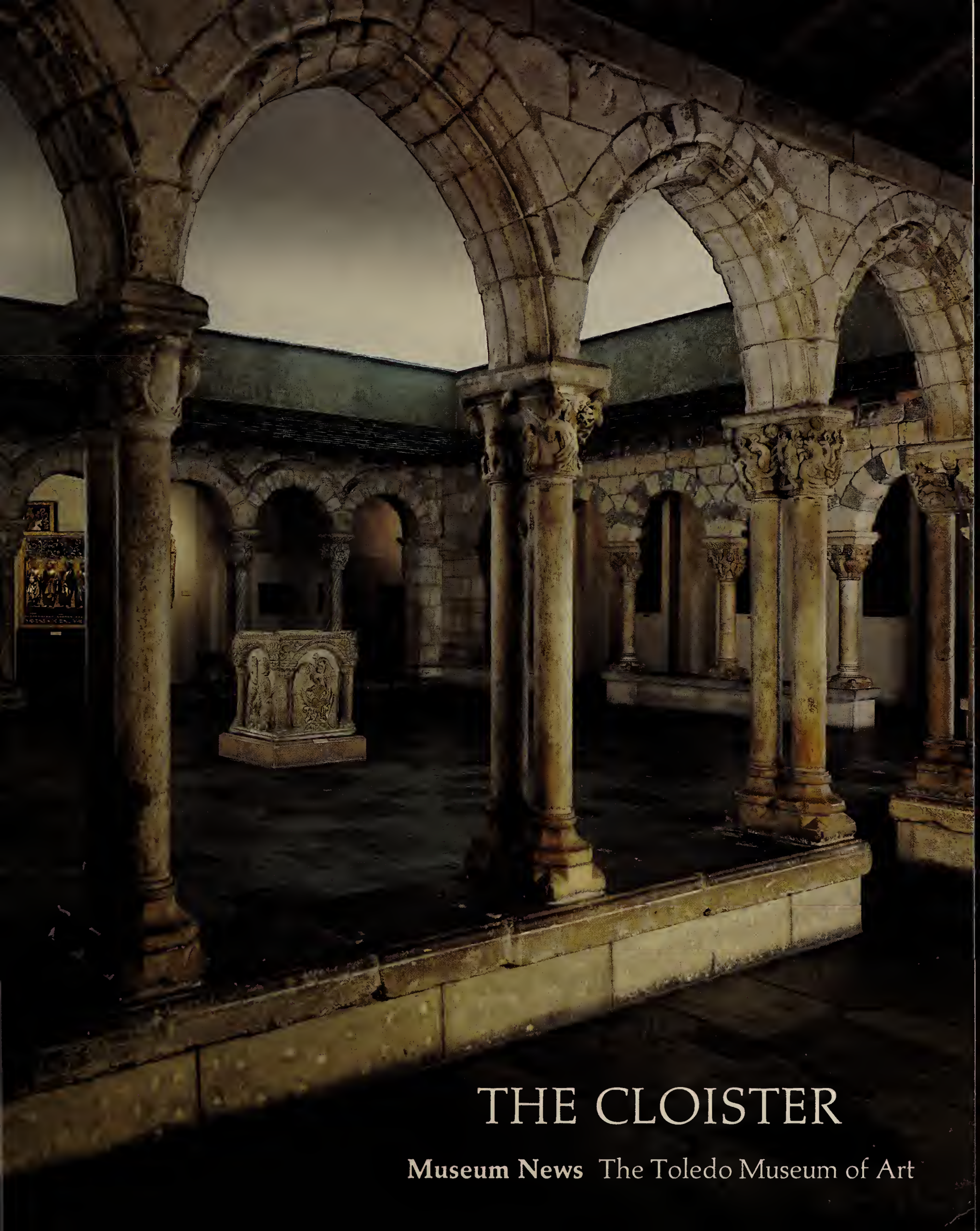

THE CLOISTER

Museum News The Toledo Museum of Art

The Cloister

For two generations the Museum's Cloister has been the focus of our medieval collection, and a favorite setting for educational, musical and other occasions. It is our only ensemble of architecture and sculpture, and as such gives an idea of scale and relationships among objects rarely possible in a museum.

While the Cloister's arcades have been studied in varying degrees, they have never been discussed comprehensively. In this publication Dr. Ricki D. Weinberger, a medieval scholar who was formerly a member of the faculty of the Museum-University of Toledo art history program, and who now is Assistant Professor of Art at Occidental College, Los Angeles, has written about the origins and significance of the Cloister arcades. The article is based both on her research into secondary sources and on her own findings.

The St. Pons and Pontaut arcades were acquired by the Museum in 1929 and 1931 respectively. As installed in the enlarged Museum building in 1933, the Cloister's other two sides were filled out by modern wood columns based on a drawing by the great medievalist Viollet-le-Duc after fifteenth century columns in the Hôtel-Dieu at Beaune. In 1934 one of these was replaced by the Cuxa arcade. Like the other two, it was acquired from the New York or Paris art markets with funds from the Edward Drummond Libbey bequest. It is our hope that one day the fourth side may be replaced by medieval stone, thus completing this vibrant and deservedly popular installation.

Roger Mandle, Director

Cover: The Cloister in The Toledo Museum of Art
(detail of the three arcades)

The Monastic Cloister

The word "cloister" is derived from the medieval Latin term *claustrum*, meaning a device for locking. By extension, the word came to refer to the enclosure that was so secured. Thus the "cloistered life" meant the sequestered existence of those who dwelt within the locked gates of monasteries. As used today, "cloister" usually has a more restricted meaning—the square or rectangular enclosure surrounded by arcaded walkways that formed the center of a monastery.

The inclusion of such a courtyard as a normal feature of the building complex came relatively late in monastic history. The earliest monks were hermits who lived alone in isolated huts during the period before official acceptance of Christianity in 325. The first monastic communities were organized in Egypt in the fourth century, but we know little of how their buildings were arranged. Although a few fifth century Syrian monasteries seem to have had enclosed cloisters, it was not until late in the eighth century that such interior courts became common in western monastic communities.

St. Benedict, the sixth century Italian monk who formulated the rule that dominated western monastic life for nearly six hundred years, stated that "the monastery . . . ought if possible to be so constituted that all things necessary, such as water, a mill, and a garden, and the various crafts may be contained within it so that there may be no need for the monks to wander abroad, for this is by no means expedient for their souls." (H. Blair, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, pp. 172–73). Thus the need for a totally self-sufficient community was emphasized by the Rule itself. However, as monasteries flourished, expanded, and increased their land holdings in the next three centuries, serfs and other laymen were gradually incorporated into the monastic precinct to help with farming and manufactures, while the monks concentrated more on reading and prayer than had been customary in earlier centuries. It has been suggested that the arrangement of claustral buildings around an inner courtyard was a method of forming a solid barrier between the living quarters of the monks and those of the secular staff essential to the monastery's functions, thus ensuring the isolation of the religious community from worldly concerns.

In the early ninth century a meeting to standardize monastic regulations was held at Aachen in northern Germany, the site of the Carolingian emperor's court. As a result of this ecclesiastical conference, a scheme illustrating the ideal layout of monastic buildings was formulated. This plan, known as the Plan of St. Gall

after a surviving copy in the monastic library at St. Gall, Switzerland, included a cloister surounded by an arcade and flanking the church. It influenced the organization of actual monastic establishments, and by the end of the ninth century such courtyards, usually square, regularly formed part of a monastery or convent.

The fact that the cloister in the St. Gall plan was placed on the church's south side was not arbitrary. This location ensured that the yard was exposed to the sun and protected from strong north winds. These considerations were important, for with the exception of occasional journeys, monastic existence centered on the courtyard and the surrounding buildings designated for eating, working, sleeping, community meetings, and prayer. Many of the monks' activities took place outdoors; only in times of extremely cold or bad weather were some of them performed inside.

Strict rules governed behavior in the cloister. The time monks spent there was mostly silent; talking was only permitted at certain periods. Even during these intervals speech was to be kept at a minimum, and sign language was developed for communication in times of silence. Eating was not allowed, and there were even regulations dictating the way a monk's garments were to be arranged when sitting.

The brothers spent several hours a day reading in the courtyard. Children, dedicated by their parents to the religious life when very young, often formed part of the monastic community. They were supervised by older monks and sat in a designated part of the cloister to study. Reading materials were kept in shelves along the walls.

Other monastic activities were held in the cloister. Both communal and private prayer took place there, as well as occasional liturgical processions. A series of basins for washing hands and face came to be a usual cloister feature. At regular intervals, usually once a week, the monks' feet were washed in a ceremony commemorating Christ's washing of the apostles' feet before the Last Supper. Beards were shaved and heads tonsured about every three weeks. Both dishes and clothing were also washed outdoors. Clotheslines were hung, and after the garments dried, they were folded and placed on benches for the monks to collect. Anyone who failed to claim his clothing had to do penance for absentmindedness.

Just as so many of the important daily functions of the monks centered on the cloister, it appropriately became the final resting place for many of them. Burials in the courtyard, beneath the walkways, or within the surrounding walls were common.

Aside from its pragmatic uses, the cloister, like the church and other monastery buildings, was subject to extensive symbolic interpretation by medieval theologians. Honorius of Autun, a twelfth century writer, spoke of the cloister as typifying heaven. In it, those who have chosen the religious life are segregated from those who dwell in the mundane world in the same way as those who achieve salvation are separated from the damned. The thirteenth century bishop William Durandus compared the cloister to Paradise, where all things are shared and there is no dissension. More important, in keeping with its locked doors and the restricted nature of life within its walls, the monastery was thought of as a prison of the body whose austere physical discipline allowed the soul freedom to dwell on God. In the twelfth century bishop Sichard of Cremona wrote that the enclosed cloister exemplifies the contemplative soul which is able to cast off carnal thoughts and meditate solely on celestial matters, and that the four sides of the cloister typify contempt of the self, contempt of the world, love of one's neighbor, and love of God. He stated that the columns within each arcade symbolize various aspects of these virtues, while the bases represent the patience necessary for their attainment.

In the Romanesque period (about 1050–1150) the decoration of buildings with a profusion of monumental figural and ornamental sculpture became an integral part of western architectural design for the first time since late antiquity. Cloisters were no exception, and their decoration included sculpted capitals, architraves, and corner piers painted, like most medieval sculpture, in bright colors. In some cases the subjects probably reflect literary symbolism or the daily activities which took place within the enclosure. For example, capitals containing the scene of Christ washing the apostles' feet might be placed near the location where this ceremony took place. In keeping with the aims of monastic life, salvation of the soul through physical punishment or mortification of the flesh was occasionally depicted. However, the subjects of cloister art vary widely, ranging from Old and New Testament scenes, saints' lives, and allegorical representations to images of everyday life and fantastic flora and fauna. Many of these themes cannot be related specifically to the ideology of monastic life, but appear to be part of a more general iconographical repertory found throughout medieval Christian art.

The use of such images—or indeed of any decoration—in cloisters, although widespread, was by no means universally approved by the clergy. In the early twelfth century an austere reform movement arose which opposed current laxity in monastic life, at that time dominated by the Cluniac Benedictines, whose churches and monastic foundations were sumptuously decorated. The new Cistercian order, led by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, advocated a return to the simple life set down by St. Benedict in his Rule. About 1124 Bernard wrote in no uncertain terms about the embellishment of cloisters, enumerating some of the more imaginative images that offended him: "In the cloister, under the eyes of the brethren who read there, what profit is there in those ridiculous monsters, in that marvellous and deformed comeliness, that comely deformity? To what purpose are those unclean apes, those fierce lions, those monstrous centaurs, those half-men, those striped tigers, those fighting knights, those hunters winding their horns? Many bodies are there seen under one head, or again, many heads to a single body. Here is a four-footed beast with a serpent's tail; there, a fish with a beast's head. Here again the forepart of a horse trails half a goat behind it, or a horned beast bears the hinder quarters of a horse. In short, so many and so marvellous are the varieties of divers shapes on every hand, that we are more tempted to read in the marble than in our books, and to spend the whole day in wondering at these things rather than in meditating the law of God. For God's sake, if men are not ashamed of these follies, why at least do they not shrink from the expense." (Letter to William of St. Thierry, trans. G. G. Coulton, *A Mediaeval Garner*, Cambridge, England, 1967, pp. 70–2). Despite the great influence of St. Bernard and the Cistercians, which resulted in the building of many monastic churches and cloisters without superfluous ornamentation, and notwithstanding the increasing dominance of the Gothic aesthetic with its emphasis on non-representational decorative forms, the embellishment of many cloister arcades with ornamental sculpture persisted. The continuance of sculptural programs in cloisters during the later Romanesque and Gothic periods is exemplified by three different arcades from southwestern France now in The Toledo Museum of Art.

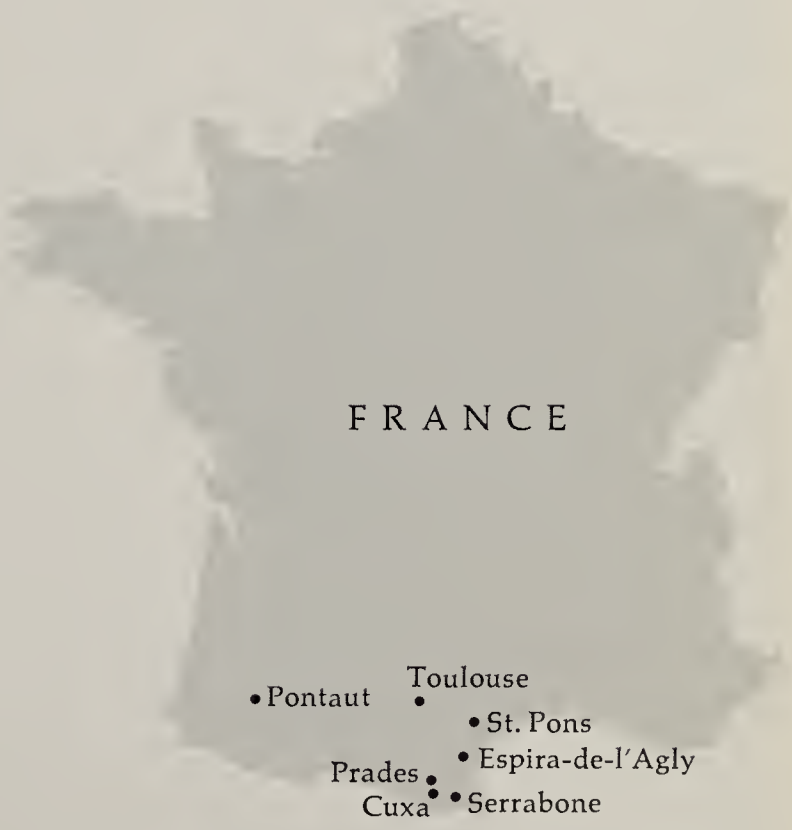

Figure 1. Map with sites mentioned.

Cuxa

The sculpture of the Museum's earliest arcade (Fig. 2) is closely related to that of the cloister of the monastery of Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa, near Prades in the Roussillon region (Fig. 1). However, as with so many fragments of medieval art in museums, the original location of the Toledo arches is unknown. A large number of Catholic foundations in France were devastated during the Protestant uprisings of the late sixteenth century and the Revolution two hundred years later. In many cases this led to abandonment of sites and razing of monastic buildings to obtain stone for construction material. Fragments, reused in later buildings or left as rubble, often found their way into private hands, and thence to museums. Knowledge of origins was often lost in the process.

The history of Cuxa is typical. In medieval times St. Michel was one of the most important Benedictine abbeys in southwestern France, its abbots renowned for their learning, administrative skill, and patronage of the arts. A functioning monastery through the eighteenth century, Cuxa was pillaged during the French Revolution, and abandoned in 1791. In the mid-nineteenth century, after the collapse of the church roof and one of its bell towers, the abbey lands were divided and sold to several local people. The extensive cloister sculpture was scattered throughout the region, leaving only nine arches of the nearly seventy that had originally surrounded the courtyard. In the early years of this century the American sculptor George Grey Barnard, an ardent collector of Romanesque and Gothic art, found many elements of the Cuxa cloister that had been stored or reused in other buildings, and brought them to New York. Several years later Barnard's remarkable assemblage of art of the Middle Ages was bought by the Metropolitan Museum of Art to form the nucleus of the medieval collection now housed at The Cloisters in Fort Tryon Park. Additional fragments were acquired by the Louvre, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the Pitcairn collection at Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. In the early 1950s most of the other known remnants were reassembled at Cuxa.

According to a plan made in 1779, the original Cuxa cloister had sixty-four columns and capitals. However, there are now some ninety-four capitals in various collections which are attributed to the monastery. This discrepancy can be best explained by two facts. The first is that sculptural workshops in the Middle Ages were primarily itinerant, craftsmen traveling from place to place as work became available. The second is

Figure 2. Cloister arcade from the Cuxa workshop. France (Rousillon), mid-12th century. Marble, height from plinth to keystone 91½ in. (232.5 cm.); height of capitals 15 in. (38 cm.). The Toledo Museum of Art. 34.93

Figure 3. Cuxa workshop capital. 34.93A

Figure 4. Cuxa workshop capital in the exterior porch of the church at Serrabone (Hautes-Pyrénées).

that almost all sculptural ensembles of Roussillon have undergone vandalism and destruction. Only one cloister, that of the former cathedral at Elne, has remained intact. It is known that the sculptors of St. Michel worked elsewhere in the region. For example, their distinctive style and subject matter can be seen in the decorative stonework at Serrabone, Villefranche-de-Conflent, and Brouilla, all smaller establishments in the vicinity. In addition, the Cuxa workshop had an overwhelming influence on other artists in Roussillon, and throughout the twelfth century numerous churches were decorated with Cuxa-inspired motifs. The sculptors whose work followed the prototypes of the St. Michel masons formed a large and flourishing school. Thus it is very likely some of the fragments attributed to Cuxa itself were actually done for other churches by the same workshop or by other artists under the sway of Cuxa models.

Although at least two art historians (José Gudiol in an unpublished paper, and Walter Cahn, in *Gesta*, IX, 2, 1970, pp. 62-3) have suggested that the Museum's arcade is from St. Michel itself, it is perhaps more likely to come from another site. The capitals vary somewhat

Figure 5. Cuxa workshop capital. 34.93B

Figure 6. Cuxa workshop capital in the tribune of the church at Serrabone.

in size from most of the known Cuxa pieces, and the marble is white, unlike the rose-tinted stone used at St. Michel. Furthermore, the arches above the Toledo capitals are made up of alternating dark and light blocks of stone, a pattern not found in the Cuxa cloister.

These considerations, together with the fact that its earliest known owner lived in Espira d'Agly, a small town northeast of Cuxa, have led to the belief that the Toledo arcade may have formed part of a cloister at the church of Notre Dame d'Espira. Although no trace of a cloister remains, the same marble found in the Toledo arches was used in construction of the Espira church, and the same scheme of alternating black and white archstones occurs throughout. However, this church is usually dated by scholars to the beginning of the thirteenth century, somewhat later than the Museum's arcade, and the sculpture *in situ*, though using some of the same motifs, has no close ties with the Toledo capitals. Thus, the theory that our arcade was once part of the Espira complex must remain hypothetical, and the possibility advanced by Gudiol and Cahn that the capitals came from Cuxa itself cannot be wholly discounted.

One assertion which can be made without fear of contradiction, however, is that the Toledo arcade is by members of the Cuxa workshop. The carving is of the same high quality as that still in place at Cuxa and Serrabone, with almost identical stylistic and iconographic features. The closeness of the relationship can be easily demonstrated by a comparison of the Toledo capitals with pieces from the two monasteries which practically duplicate them. (Figs. 3 and 4; 5 and 6; 7 and 8; 9 and 10).

The capitals are simple and vigorous in design. Compositions conform closely to the structural shape. The sculpture is remarkable for the absence of religious or anecdotal themes. Instead, the artists' efforts have been concentrated on the creation of schematic and symmetrical patterns largely made of of zoomorphic motifs. Eagles, doves, lions, and various monstrous creatures populate the capitals, sharing the space with leaves, volutes, and floral patterns. Diagonal striations, chevron incising, and pearl bands enliven the sculpture still further. The carving is adept, with relatively deep relief and drill work used to emphasize different parts of the designs. The animals have alert expressions, powerful

Figure 7. Cuxa workshop capital. 34.93C

Figure 8. Capital at Cuxa (from Durliat, *La sculpture romane*).

Figure 9. Cuxa workshop capital. 34.93D

Figure 10. Capital at Cuxa (from Durliat, *La sculpture romane*).

heads, and beautifully articulated bodies, though naturalism has been subordinated to ornament. For example, dual bodies often share a single head. These beasts, with their stylized shapes and postures, are clearly of Near Eastern origin and were probably adapted from the Islamic textiles and ivories which found their way into Christian Europe through Moorish Spain. Arab influence can also be seen in the alternating colors of the arcade stonework, a common feature in Islamic construction.

Although the Toledo arcade cannot be dated directly, the data pertaining to related monuments are valuable in this regard. While absolute precision is impossible, dating of the Cuxa cloister is relatively secure. In the third quarter of the nineteenth century an antiquarian described and sketched a bas-relief he had seen in the courtyard. This relief, which has since disappeared, represented an abbot of St. Michel with the inscription GREGORIUS ARCHIEPISCOPUS ABBAS ("Gregory, Archbishop and Abbot"). Abbot Gregory is mentioned in abbey documents beginning in 1130. In addition to his monastic duties, he assumed the Spanish archepiscopal seat of Tarrragona in 1137. A new abbot is mentioned at Cuxa in 1145, and Gregory died in 1146. It is likely that the effigy of Gregory indicates the cloister was conceived and constructed during his reign, and since he is designated both abbot and archbishop, the dating span can be narrowed to 1137–1145.

For Serrabone dating is more circumstantial. The church was consecrated by the bishop of Elne in 1151. Such ceremonies could be held to commemorate either the beginning or end of construction. In this case, although no mention was made of the state of the building at the time, it is usually assumed that the church, along with the sculpture so closely linked to that at Cuxa, was finished at a date not distant from that of the consecration.

In the case of Espira d'Agly, a document of 1211 describes the church as new, and the architectural style of the present structure appears to confirm this late dating. However, there was also a consecration in 1130. If the Toledo arcade did once form part of a cloister at Espira, it was probably built as part of the 1130 campaign, no recognizable parts of which remain. The dating evidence for Cuxa, Serrabone, and Espira leads to the conclusion that the Toledo Museum arcade was made in approximately the middle of the twelfth century. Given the virtual identity of style in the Cuxa, Serrabone, and Toledo sculpure, not much time could have elapsed between the three projects.

Saint-Pons-de-Thomières

The second set of arches at Toledo (Fig. 11) illustrates a very different concept in decoration than that of the arcade by the Cuxa workshop, even though the two were made in the same general region at about the same time. The capitals from Saint-Pons-de-Thomières are wholly narrative, illustrating scenes from the Old and New Testaments and early Christian history. Decorative schemes, of paramount importance to the Cuxa sculptors, are here subordinated to the compositional demands of the complex subject matter, and repetitive ornamental patterns are reserved for the architrave mouldings over the capitals.

St. Pons was founded in 937 at the small town of Thomières with a donation from Count Raymond Pons of Toulouse, who wished thus to honor his patron saint. In many ways the history of the monastery parallels that of Cuxa, founded only sixty years earlier. Both were Benedictine abbeys under the strong influence of the Cluniac order, and had important establishments with prominent patrons and influential leaders. Like Cuxa, St. Pons reached the apogee of its power in the twelfth century. The two monasteries suffered great devastation, St. Pons during anti-Catholic attacks by the Huguenots in 1567, St. Michel during the Revolution. Each eventually fell into ruin, and bits and pieces of the claustral buildings were dismantled and sold, although the churches themselves remained relatively intact. At St. Pons this final destruction occurred in the late eighteenth century, a hundred years earlier that that of Cuxa.

Although the Romanesque churches of Cuxa and St. Pons are about the same size, the two cloisters differed greatly. At Cuxa there were fifteen to twenty arches in each of the four galleries. The St. Pons cloister was much smaller. A fifteenth century plan shows the rectangular layout had six arches in the east and west galleries and seven on the north and south.

Reconstruction of the St. Pons cloister presents different problems from those of Cuxa. Unlike St. Michel, no original contruction has been preserved at the site, and there is no documentary evidence to help date the beginning of the cloister project. Adding to the difficulties is the fact that some of the forty-four capitals that have survived (in collections at St. Pons, Toulouse, Montpellier, Paris, London, New York, Boston, Cambridge, Mass. and Richmond, Va., as well as Toledo) are single, supported by only one shaft, while others are double. In addition, the sculpture shows three distinct styles, two of which are completely Romanesque, while the third is early Gothic.

One of the Romanesque styles, using static figures with stocky proportions, concentric drapery patterns with superimposed double-bordered, plate-like folds, large monstrous animals, striated backgrounds, and much ornamental drillwork, emphasizes symbolic rather than narrative content. Most of the capitals in this group (unrepresented in the Toledo collection) contain simple humanoid and bestial creatures. Only three of the twelve capitals are actually narrative, although these subjects are presented in an extremely schematic and unrealistic manner. The episodes shown are the Crucifixion, Christ Giving the Keys of His Kingdom to Peter, and the Three Magi with Joseph and an angel.

The second group of capitals is far more narrative in character. The subjects include Daniel in the Lions' Den, an Old Testament sacrifice and the Feeding of the Multitude, the Entombment of Christ and the Holy Women at the Tomb, the Appearances of Christ to the Disciples at Emmaus and to Mary Magdalen, and the Ascension. Others show the Stoning of St. Stephen, St. George and the Dragon, and there are two capitals with scenes from the life of St. Pons (Figs. 12 and 13). Although some of the same stylistic conventions appear, the figures are more animated and have more naturalistic facial features than those of the first group, despite rather blank expressions. The depiction of hair as uniformly shoulder-length with upturned ends is consistent with that of the earlier capitals. Drapery folds no longer overlap, but still retain the double borders and concentric patterns. Many figures populate the scenes, which stretch like friezes around the capitals.

The capitals of the third group, like those of the second, are primarily narrative. The range of subject matter is also similar. Old Testament events from the life of Joseph are depicted on one capital, while two others contain episodes from that of Moses (Figs. 17 and 18). The New Testament and related texts are represented by the Annunciation to Zacharias of Mary's

Figure 11. Cloister arcade from Saint-Pons-de-Thomières. France (Hérault). Marble, height from plinth to keystone 112½ in. (286 cm.); height of capitals 16 in. (40.5 cm.). The Toledo Museum of Art. 29.203-.208

Birth, Christ and the Apostles at Supper in the House of Simon, and Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane (Fig. 19). There are also depictions of the Last Judgment (Figs. 20–22), the Blessed, and more scenes from St. Pons' life (Figs. 14-16). The sculptural style in these capitals is quite different from that of the first two groups. Figures are taller and more slender, and facial features are more delicate. Although the heads are somewhat reminiscent of those in the capitals of the second group, the outer corners of the eyes here turn upward, noses are longer, and mouths are wide, appearing to smile very slightly. The hair is softly waved and falls gently rather than being turned up stiffly at the ends. The concentric patterns of stylized folds with double borders that marked the earlier drapery are missing; instead, the garments are heavy, with long, sharp-edged vertical folds. The swaths of cloth that encircle the figures' waists form volumetric v-folds. In the first two groups frontality was most often the rule, while in these capitals the figures are usually placed in modified three-quarters poses. Their graceful postures make them appear far less rigid than the inhabitants of the Romanesque capitals. These new stylistic elements come directly from the Ile-de-France, the region surrounding Paris where during the last years of the twelfth century and the first years of the thirteenth sculptural workshops created the courtly and elegant Gothic style which dominated art in much of Europe until after 1500.

Dating the St. Pons sculpture is a problem. Earlier studies, noting strong connections between the first group of capitals and sculpture of the Pyrenees region and northern Spain, concluded that the capitals probably dated from the end of the eleventh century, when the St. Pons abbot served as a papal representative in Catalonia. More recently, however, scholars have placed this group in the second quarter of the twelfth century, pointing out that its style is most closely related to that of Cuxa and Serrabone. Sahuc, who in 1908 wrote the seminal study of St. Pons, thought that the second and third groups of capitals were contemporaneous, probably due in large part to their iconographical similarities. He dated both to the end of the twelfth century. However, it is obvious that the second group is far closer to the first stylistically. The differences between them appear to be the result of new influences from workshops north of Roussillon, especially in and around Toulouse, where the monuments that correspond best with the St. Pons sculpture are dated 1125-50. Thus, the consensus of modern art historians is that only ten to twenty years intervened between the creation, at some time prior to the mid-century, of the first and second set of capitals. The relatively sophisticated Gothic traits of the third group have encouraged later scholars to further revise Sahuc's dating, and it is now thought these capitals were probably carved about 1220–25. The cloister sculpture thus spans nearly a hundred years.

In 1170 a local noble sacked the St. Pons monastery after an altercation with its abbot. The dispute was resolved in 1171, and provisions were made for the abbey's restoration. Apparently the last group of capitals was carved after this event, and it has been surmised that they replaced sculpture lost in the siege. More probably, however, the Gothic capitals were made to complete rather than to restore the cloister. One Toledo capital (Fig. 14) and another in the Metropolitan Museum show evidence of having been reworked. While most of each capital is carved in the thirteenth century idiom, one figure wears a garment with concentric, double-bordered folds covering the entire torso, identical to the drapery style of the second set of capitals. These pieces were clearly left unfinished at some point, and later reused. Such material is more likely to have been available to later craftsmen if the cloister had been left incomplete for some reason.

Any attempt to reconstruct the original placement of the surviving sculpture is probably doomed to failure. The Museum's St. Pons arcade consists of seven bays divided by pairs of colonettes supporting double capitals. We cannot be certain that this was the original arrangement. Although our arcade appears relatively homogeneous, it should be pointed out that its components were assembled some fifty years ago. The French dealer's notes to the Museum explain, in somewhat fractured English, how this was done: "The six capitals, abacus and some columns and bases were found, some in Saint-Pons, some in the suburbs, and some further away in the country in private properties. Also, helped by the antiquarians of the district looking for old materials, we have been able to find amongst the ruins parts of columns, bases, etc . . . coming from the cloister. In the South of the city, in old cellars we found marble semi-circle vaulting with keystones. So it was possible, using all these dispersed elements or fragments all put together with great care in their primitive places to rebuild an ensemble perfectly homogeneous of seven arches which is a precious specimen and gives an exact idea of what could have been that marvelous cloister of Saint Pons which was one of the nicest in France."

If the grouping made by the dealer is accurate, and double capitals supported all the arcades, twenty-two double capitals would have been required to support the twenty-six arches that made up the four sides of the cloister. Nineteen such capitals are known. However, there are also another twenty-four single capitals from the abbey, some of which are the same height as the double ones, while others are quite a bit shorter. It has been surmised that at least a few of the single capitals originally adorned the facade of the church. How the others were employed is unknown. Single and double capitals occur in all three stylistic groups. The subject matter of large and small capitals does not differ. Thus, stylistic and iconographical distinctions cannot to be used to help estimate the original site of the smaller pieces. Although typical of the puzzles that beset medievalists, the reconstruction of the St. Pons cloister is particularly vexing.

Iconographically, the sculpture is less problematic. Most of the narrative scenes have been identified; similar events are portrayed on cloister and nave capitals and on church facades all through the later Middle Ages. The sculpture in Toledo, among the most interesting from St. Pons, includes three of the four surviving capitals with scenes from the life of Pons, a third century martyr who was the son of a Roman senator, and who converted to Christianity at age twenty. The emperor Decius, a great enemy of Christianity, ordered all citizens to sacrifice to the Roman gods or to suffer grave punishment. Pons fled to Gaul, where he supposedly became bishop of Cimiez, near Nice. The proconsul Claudius, who governed the Roman province, demanded that Pons pay tribute to the Empire's official gods. Pons refused, and as a result was tortured by ferocious bears, placed on the rack, and finally beheaded.

The three Romanesque capitals depicting the legend of Pons all contain scenes of his torture. One of the two in Toledo shows the saint with hands and ankles bound, while the bears, miraculously tamed, lick his feet (Fig. 12). On the opposite face, Claudius sits in judgment, and spectators line the other two sides. The second capital portrays the beheading of the saint. The composition is similar to that of the first. Pons' martyrdom is placed at one end (Fig. 13), while Claudius

Figure 12. Capital from St. Pons. St. Pons delivered to the bears which caress him. 29.203

Figure 13. Capital from St. Pons. The beheading of St. Pons. 29.207

Figure 14. Capital from St. Pons. The baptism of St. Pons. 29.205

Figure 15. Capital from St. Pons. Mounted emperor (?) at the baptism of St. Pons. 29.205

Figure 17. Capital from St. Pons. Moses parting the Red Sea. 29.204

Figure 18. Capital from St. Pons. Aaron with his flowering staff. 29.204

Figure 20. Capital from St. Pons. The Last Judgment: Weighing of souls. 29.208

Figure 21. Capital from St. Pons. The Last Judgment: Torture of the damned. 29.208

Figure 16. Capital from St. Pons. The refusal of St. Pons to worship false gods. 29.205

Figure 19. Capital from St. Pons. Christ at Gethsemane (right), and Judas embracing Christ (left). 29.206

Figure 22. Capital from St. Pons. The Last Judgment: The mouth of Hell. 29.208

reigns over the proceedings at the other, and onlookers flank the remainder of the capital. The third Romanesque capital is in Montpellier; it depicts the saint's arrest and his torture on the rack.

While the twelfth century capitals emphasize the sufferings of the saint for his faith, the single Gothic composition portrays earlier events in Pons' life, including his baptism (Fig. 14) and his refusal to worship idols (Fig. 16). The baptismal ceremony is witnessed by a figure on horseback (Fig. 15), who may be emperor Phillip the Arabian, who supposedly was converted by St. Pons.

The other capitals in the Museum illustrate better known subjects. On one, Moses is shown parting the Red Sea, complete with fishes (Fig. 17), while on an adjoining side Aaron, Moses' brother, points to his staff (Fig. 18), which blossomed as indication that the Lord had chosen him and his descendants to be the hereditary priests of Israel. Another capital represents the vigil of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane followed by his betrayal (Fig. 19) and arrest. Finally, there is a beautifully carved piece that demonstrates the inevitable reward for those who live in unrepentent sin: judgment (Fig. 20), torture (Fig. 21), and eternal damnation (Fig. 22). The lost soul here appears to be a woman, who is punished for the sin of *luxuria*, or lust. Snakes bite at her nipples, and the heat of her temporal passion is increased by the flames that issue from the mouth of Hell to keep the cauldron into which she has been thrown boiling.

Pontaut

The third arcade (Fig. 23), from the abbey of Notre-Dame-de-Pontaut in Gascony (Fig. 1), was built later than the other two. A Gothic date can be deduced from its pointed arches and faceted bases. These contrast with the semicircular arches and rounded bases that were commonly used during the Romanesque period. Although again no documentary evidence exists, most scholars conclude on stylistic grounds that the Pontaut cloister was built in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century .

Little is known of the abbey's history. It was founded by the Benedictines in 1115, almost two centuries after St. Pons and Cuxa. In 1151 Pontaut became part of the new Cistercian order. Like St. Pons, it was sacked by the Huguenots in the 1560s and was never rebuilt. The abbey was finally secularized in 1791, and its holdings sold. The monastic buildings slowly fell to ruin, and in the nineteenth century the dilapidated structures were used for farm animals.

The Cistercian order was known for its austerity, and in its early period formulated a strong prohibition against architectural decoration and pictorial art. The chapter house from Pontaut of about 1150, now in The Cloisters, New York, reflects this creed. It is quite stark, without superfluous ornamentation. By the mid-thirteenth century the puritanical artistic doctrines of the Cistercians were no longer regularly observed, although there were occasional attempts to renew the early restrictions. It may have been at one of these times that the cloister arcade was walled up, not to be rediscovered until 1930, shortly before its sale to the Museum.

The Toledo arcade contains the only cloister elements known to have survived. Judging from its length, the courtyard seems to have been relatively small. This estimate is in keeping with the few known facts about the abbey's population. Although Pontaut was relatively well endowed, only twelve monks were in residence in the mid-fifteenth century. Following the Protestant attacks, the number dropped to eight.

The style of the sculpture, though uniform, is not of the same high quality as that of the other two Toledo arcades. Both foliate forms and figures are schematic and somewhat simplistic in type. The capitals have also been severely damaged, effacing much of the detail.

While the St. Pons capitals have traditional religious images, the Pontaut sculpture appears to be far more secular. Seven of the nine double capitals (only eight are on display) have figural decoration. The inhabitants vary widely, and include courtiers, clergy, and bizarre

Figure 23. Cloister arcade from Notre-Dame-de-Pontaut. France (Landes), late 14th-early 15th century. Marble, height from plinth to keystone 107 in. (272 cm.); height of capitals 15 in. (38 cm.). The Toledo Museum of Art. 31.81-.88

Figure 24. Capital from Pontaut. Men kneeling. 31.86

Figure 25. Capital from Pontaut. A monk preaching. 31.86

Figure 26. Capital from Pontaut. The romance of Barlaam and Josephat. 31.84

Figure 27. Capital from Pontaut. The romance of Barlaam and Josephat. 31.84

Figure 28. Capital from Pontaut. Clerics with sacks of errors. 31.83

Figure 29. Capital from Pontaut. Bizarre monsters. 31.87

animals. For example, on one capital two figures, one in monastic garb, the other in courtly dress, kneel facing each other (Fig. 24). On the opposite face a half figure is depicted in a raised pulpit. Monks listen to his sermon, while below the pulpit stands a goat (Fig. 25).

Although these capitals have been interpreted as mere anecdotal representations of everyday life, a recent study by the musicologist Genette Foster has convincingly stressed the didactic nature of some of the subjects. Recognizing that Cistercian art generally inclined far more toward moral propaganda than toward genre for its own sake, she has attributed allegorical meanings to the various scenes. One of the capitals shows a group that includes a monstrous head with huge jaws and a man in a tree. A unicorn charges the tree while two smaller animals gnaw at its roots (Fig. 26). Adjacent to these figures are two dancing couples and a musician playing an instrument (Fig. 27). Large leering heads appear at intervals above the other characters. Foster points out that the first set of figures is a literal rendition of the fourth allegory in the early medieval *Romance of Barlaam and Josephat:*

> A man flying before the face of a rampant unicorn, unable to endure the sound of the beast's cry and its terrible bellowing, to avoid being devoured, ran away at full speed. But while he ran hastily, he fell into a great pit; and as he fell, he stretched forth his hands, and laid hold foot-hold and thought himself from that moment in peace and safety. But he looked and descried two mice, the one white, the other black, that never ceased to gnaw at the root of the tree whereon he hung, and were all but on the point of severing it. Then he looked down to the bottom of the pit and espied below the dragon, breathing fire, fearful for the eye to see, exceedingly fierce and grim, with terrible wide jaws, all agape to swallow him. . . . Then he lifted up his eyes and saw that from the branches of the tree there dropped a little honey. And thereat he ceased to think of the troubles whereby he was surrounded. . . . Yea, he forgot, without care, all those sights of awe and terror, and his whole mind hung on the sweetness of that tiny drop of honey. This is the likeness of those who cleave to the deceitfulness of this present life,—the interpretation whereof I will declare to thee anon. The unicorn is the type of death. . . . The pit is the world, full of all manner of ills and deadly snares. The tree, which was being continually fretted by the two mice, to which the man clung, is the course of every man's life, that spendeth and consuming itself hour by hour, day and night, and gradually draweth nigh its severance. Furthermore, the fiery cruel dragon betokeneth the man of hell that is hungry to receive those who choose present pleasures rather than future blessings. The dropping of honey denoteth the sweetness of the delights of the world, whereby it deceiveth its own friends, nor suffereth them to take timely thought for their salvation. (G.R. Woodward and H. Mattingly, trans. and ed., *Barlaam and Ioasaph*, p. 25).

Foster believes that the dancers on the capital may also represent those who delight in temporal pleasures at the expense of their souls, while the grimaces of the heads above warn against such folly.

Another capital contains clerical figures with large sacks (Fig. 28) which Foster believes may be filled with syllables and words that had been mispronounced or omitted from psalms and services chanted by careless monks, or perhaps sung too loudly without a proper spirit of devotion and humility. Legends of clerics weighed down by such burdens of thoughtlessness and vanity abound in the medieval period.

It is more difficult to attach specific meanings to the figures that populate the other capitals in the Pontaut arcade. The four hybrid creations with dogs' bodies, birds' feet and humanoid heads that encircle one capital (Fig. 29) seem intended to be both amusing and monstrous. Such compositions are common in medieval art. Often they derive from written accounts in bestiaries which purport to describe actual creatures. Although these strange beasts cannot be related directly to known didactic moral stories, nevertheless it is extremely likely that their presence (as well as that of a siren, a fool and a jackass on other capitals) all carry the same message: the danger of succumbing to the world's temptations.

Conclusion

In examining the three Toledo arcades, we see the great variety of architectural and sculptural styles that may be found in the medieval cloister. The round arches of the Romanesque ensembles, the pointed ones of the Gothic, the repetitive ornament of the Cuxa-related capitals, the frieze-like configurations of those from St. Pons, and the scattered compositional patterns that characterize the Pontaut sculpture demonstrate the vast artistic differences that can occur. There is also a wide range in subjects, from the apparently meaningless and wholly decorative forms of the Cuxa atelier to the biblical narratives of St. Pons and complex allegorical romances of Pontaut. In these arcades the artistic sense as well as the deep religiosity and erudition of the medieval mind is apparent, and in the study of such monuments we gain insight into the complex world of the Middle Ages.

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Collections

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St. Pons arcade: Jammes, Mazamet (Tarn), and Mme. Hüe, Château de Cabannes, Courniou (Hérault), 1908; (Paul Gouvert, and M. and R. Stora, Paris; Durlacher Bros., New York).
Pontaut arcade: Dyzez, Samadet (Landes); de Poudenx; (Paul Gouvert, Paris).

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